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## Frances' "Hebrew Prosody."

*Hebräische Prosodie von Immanuel Frances, zum ersten Male ediert, und mit einer Einleitung, Anmerkungen und Beilagen versehen von H. BRODY. Krakau, 1892. (Herausgegeben im Selbstverlage des Vereins M'Kize Nirdamin, Berlin.)*

MR. BRODY deserves our thanks for having supplied students of Hebrew literature with a substantial and important addition to their hitherto rather scanty information on two interesting writers of the seventeenth century. Immanuel Frances and his elder brother Jacob, who, like their father David ben Samuel and his ancestors for at least three previous generations, took an active and honourable part in the literary and communal life of their day, lived in difficult and stirring times. The extravagant cabbalistic notions of the mystic school of Isaac Loria and Hayyim Vital had just culminated in the delusive pretensions of Shabbethai Zebi, and the brothers Frances had the courage to range themselves on the side of the small but clear-headed minority who opposed this unwholesome and dangerous movement. With extensive learning they combined a considerable amount of poetic talent, and they vigorously employed this noble gift as a potent weapon against the new and mischievous heresy. The effect of their efforts may be estimated by the fact that the followers of Shabbethai Zebi and Nathan of Gaza found it necessary to commit Jacob's poem, beginning *אשרי הנוי*, to the flames. A few copies, however, of this short composition escaped destruction, and of these the British Museum possesses one, and the Bodleian Library another. Neither the date nor the place of publication are given on it, but if Steinschneider's<sup>1</sup> conjecture that it was published at Mantua in 1666 be correct, its publication would coincide with the most critical year in the career of Shabbethai Zebi. Several other poems of the brothers Frances were published in their lifetime, and it is probably due to hostility and accident combined that only the few copies of that one poem have come down to us in printed form. The memory of their poetic gifts was, however, not forgotten. An honourable place is assigned to some of their shorter compositions in the poetic miscellany entitled *קול ענב*, which was published by A. B. Piperno, in 1846. A more extensive instalment of their writings was published by Mordecai Mortara in 1885 (*מקוצי נרדמים—קבץ על יד*). The most important part of this publication is the *ספר צבי מדה*, consisting

<sup>1</sup> *Cat. Libr. Hebr.* in *Bibl. Bodl.*, p. 1211.

mainly of poems by the two brothers against Shabbethai Zebi and his followers. But there can be no doubt that, both from a literary and historical point of view, Mr. Brody's work is the most valuable contribution that has yet appeared on the subject; for besides the *Hebräische Prosodie*, or מִתְק שְׁפָתַיִם, of Immanuel Frances, he gives a full biographical and literary account of the talented brothers, and also brings several interesting contemporary personages under review.

But whilst fully appreciating the poetic talent of the two brothers, and the honourable use which they made of it, we cannot go the length of assigning them a place among the great Hebrew poets. They could write beautifully and effectively, but between that and the full measure of poetic genius there is a wide difference. Of the two, Jacob no doubt possessed a greater depth of poetic feeling, though his brother Immanuel stands higher for correctness of form, and was probably also a more effective writer of epigrams. Mr. Brody has himself expressed no opinion on the relative merits of the two brothers, but the various compositions which he has carefully collected and arranged in his הוֹסֵפֹת, or *Beilagen*, supply ample material for a comparative estimate of their respective work. Immanuel's treatise on Hebrew Prosody, which takes the form of a dialogue between the imaginary personages Yakhin and Bo'az, is written in a lively and somewhat pointed style, but can in no sense be looked upon as a standard work on the subject. The poems quoted in illustration of the different metrical forms are all compositions of the two brothers themselves. This evinces too large a measure of self-appreciation on the one hand, and a want of literary comprehensiveness on the other; but as their writings are more interesting from a personal and historical, than from the strictly metrical point of view, it is a gain that several of their smaller pieces have been preserved to us in this treatise.

Mr. Brody has used the MS. 488<sup>1</sup> of the Royal Library of Berlin for his edition, and he has no doubt made the best use possible of the material at his command. The contents of the British Museum Add. MS. 27,095,<sup>2</sup> throw, however, a good deal of fresh light on several important points connected with the subject under review. There is, to begin with, an explicit and important biographical statement on fol. 28<sup>b</sup> of that MS., which Mr. Brody would no doubt have embodied in his work if he had known of it. This statement is in the words of Immanuel Frances himself, and runs as follows:—

אני שמואל בכמה"ר דוד בכמה"ר שמואל בכמה"ר אברהם בכמה"ר יוסף

<sup>1</sup> No. 56 in Steinschneider's Catalogue.

<sup>2</sup> Copied by Almanzi, in 1840, from an older MS.

פראנסיש נ"ע נולדתי בעיר ליוורנו מש"ק בין ד' וה' שעות הלילה כ"ט תמוז  
שנת השע"ח ליצירה וכתבתי זה לזכרון היום כ"ט תמוז התמ"ח למלאה  
שבעים שנה להולדי שבהם כמה צרות סבבוני ובעונותי שדי לי המר •  
ולבי חמרמר • וכו'

Immanuel's native place was therefore Livorno, and not Mantua, and the year of his birth was 1618, that is twelve years earlier than Mr. Brody conjectures, and it also follows that our author was of the ripe age of 85, when he wrote his approbation (הסכמה) on the הלכות קטנות of Jacob Chagis, which appeared in 1704.

With regard to the *Hebräische Prosodie* itself, the British Museum MS. contains on fol. 1<sup>a</sup> a statement by Immanuel Frances, which makes it clear that after having composed his work in 1677, he subjected it to a final revision two years later, and a comparison of Mr. Brody's edition with the text of Add. 27,095 reveals the fact that the former contains the unrevised text of 1677, and not the final recension. The differences between the two are not inconsiderable. The wording of the dialogue between יבין and בעז varies largely at times, and the poems in illustration of the different metres are also not the same throughout.

The Berlin codex contains several pieces which are not given in the British Museum MS., but the latter has, on the other hand, several compositions which are not found in the former. Of these the most important is a very realistic plaintive poem by Immanuel Frances, beginning: יום התמותה עוד מעט יגיע עלי כעל גנב זמן יריע—; and of the shorter pieces, the poem beginning: ימי כהנה ויש ביני—: also deserves a place among our author's later compositions.

It will therefore be seen that, without detracting any portion of the praise which is rightly due to Mr. Brody for his able, painstaking, and conscientious work, his edition would have had a much increased value, if he had been able to collate the MS. on which his work is based with codices in possession of other European libraries. This is, however, a wish which it is much easier to express than to carry into action, and as Mr. Brody announces further publications in connection with the same subject, he will no doubt take the earliest opportunity to supplement his work by the aid of any fresh materials that may be brought to his notice. It would be interesting to add some remarks on Mr. Brody's lively and expressive, but certainly not fault-

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<sup>1</sup> Compare No. 1990 in Dr. Neubauer's Catalogue of the Hebrew MSS. in the Bodleian Library, where, however, an earlier date is assigned to the composition of the work.

less Hebrew style ; but as such an attempt would be likely to carry this notice beyond its legitimate length, and as style is after all a matter of taste, it seems best to conclude with an assurance to Mr. Brody of our good wishes, and sincere appreciation of his literary activity, which is carried on in the true scientific spirit, and which contains in it the promise of an interesting and highly successful career.

G. MARGOLIOUTH.

### CORRIGENDA.

SEVERAL errata crept into my last article through the omission of the editors to send me second proofsheets. The following is a list of the gravest errors, while I leave those of minor importance to the correction of the reader.

Page 120, rem. 1, l. 3, read *elā āshir*; l. 4, read *afkar*.

„ „ „ 6, l. 5. *after* mentioned, read (rem. 4*b*); l. 6, read 24 verses.

„ 121, „ 2, l. 1, read Shalōm b. Josef Shabzi.

„ „ „ 3, l. 3, read *Reime und*.

„ 124, „ 1, read p. 121, rem. 1 (*b*); last line, read טפֿל וְגִיר—

„ 126, „ VII.<sup>1</sup>, read אֱלֹלֶר; VIII.<sup>1</sup>, read אֱלֹתֵאֱלֹת.

„ 127, XI. (Text), l. 3, read בִּיף.

„ 129, rem. XXIII.<sup>4</sup>, read תִּקוֹל לִי.

„ 131, „ XXX.<sup>4</sup>, read לֹא אֱלֹלֶה אֱלֹא הוּא.

H. HIRSCHFELD.